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UNIVERSAL SERVICE AS THE BASIS OF NATIONAL UNITY AND NATIONAL DEFENSE ¹

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I DEEM it a fortunate thing that leaders in political thought recognize the fundamental importance of a searching discussion of the subject of universal military service. Of many pressing political questions facing us for solution, the question of the adoption of universal military service is the most vital. The candid mind must admit that the national unity and the national defense demand our primary attention in this troublous day of the world. From the purely military standpoint, none will deny that universal service is the best foundation for national defense. I believe also that it would afford the most powerful agency for effecting the national unity. Therefore, from the twin issues of national unity and national defense comes the great principle of universal service, holding in our decision as to its acceptance or rejection consequences of its inestimable and eternal import of the nation. It is no matter of passing academic interest you have selected for discussion. It is a matter lying at the roots of the nation's life.

My contention here is that universal military service is essential to the safety of America and the integrity of its policies, that it is morally just, and that it impairs not one iota the ideals of Democracy.

First, let us dispel the illusion that the adoption of universal service is a thing to be settled by the desires and tastes of a given people. Pacifist orators berate conscription as an evil thing adopted by the corrupt autocracies of Europe for the enslavement of subject peoples and the general propagation of wars. There is no connection between the frequency of wars and conscription, unless the existence of nations in arms as the

¹ An address delivered at the evening session of the Academy of Political Science, May 18, 1916.

result of conscription tends to make wars more infrequent on account of the hesitation of governing authorities to bring on a cataclysm of violence that will draw into the maelstrom all the material and human resources of the state. But what we must see, and see clearly, is that it has not been volition that has driven the world to universal service. It has been necessity. It has been the operation of a universal law. It has been the operation of the law of supply and demand on the field of national defense.

The demand for numbers in war is greater than the voluntary supply. As modern invention increases the facility with which great numbers are transported and disposed, greater and greater armies can be brought to bear, and the principle applies even more fully. Modern transportation systems make possible the nearly immediate concentration of vast numbers. Thus wars come to a critical stage in a very few days or weeks, and the armies therefore must be scientifically organized and trained to meet the shock of war. Thus the demand for numbers in war operates not only in time of war in the prosecution of war, but in time of peace in preparation for war.

Universal military service is no new thing in the world. It is not even the child of modern times. It is as old as recorded history. About 1500 years before the birth of Christ, Moses organized the military power of his people on the foundation of universal service. The Scriptures hath it that "On the first day of the second month, in the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt," God commanded Moses: "Take ye the sum of all the congregation of the children of Israel . . . with the number of their names, every male by their polls; from twenty years old and upward, all that are able to go forth to the war in Israel; thou and Aaron shall number them by their armies." "As the Lord commanded Moses, so he numbered them in the wilderness of Sinai." The fighting men of each tribe numbered, on an average, 50,000. The total force was 603,550. As far as I know, this is the first recorded instance in history of the organization of a nation in arms. And nearly ever since, throughout the life of the human race, each empire that spread abroad its sway to distant dominions,

and each lesser state that maintained its independence, has had to come to the application of the general principle elaborated in the Jewish military system.

Greece was able to stand successfully against the innumerable Persian hordes because every Greek citizen was a soldier. Athens and Sparta were just as much nations in arms as Germany, France and Russia are today.

The Roman army was the greatest army that the world has produced, judged by the extent of its conquests and the long duration of its supremacy. The military history of Rome recounts success and failure in accordance with the degree with which the citizenship of Rome bore its military responsibilities. With the accumulation of riches and luxuries, the citizenship became self-indulgent, soft and unwilling to stand the hardships of military life. Mercenaries were hired to do the fighting that should have been done by Roman citizens. Disasters were suffered, and only under the reforms that revived the system of citizenship service was Rome able to stave off for a time her dissolution.

In the chaos of the dark ages, the Roman system was engulfed, except as it persisted in the Byzantine Empire. The primitive system of tribal levies was recurred to until Charlemagne laid the foundations of the feudal system. Military organization under the feudal system continued also the principle of universal liability for service. Then came a period of professional standing armies which endured until Frederick the Great had to press into service the whole man-power of his people to escape national annihilation in the Seven Years War. As we look back over the records of history down to the Napoleonic era, we see the downfall of nations co-terminous with the decline of military virtue and the abandonment of thoroughgoing systems of universal service. It may be that, fundamentally, the decline of military virtue was due to civic and private degeneration, but always the first sign of coming dissolution was the effort of the citizen to avoid the rigor of military service.

It is interesting to note in passing that the word "conscription" was born when French democracy was having its pro-

longed and bloody birth times. The word is found for the first time in the French law of the 19th Fructidor, 1798, which imposed upon *les défenseurs conscrits* liability for military service from their twentieth to their twenty-fifth year of age. General Jourdon introduced it into the Council of the Five Hundred and its passage made possible the conquests of Napoleon and imposed upon all of Napoleon's continental enemies the necessity of similar measures. By the Napoleonic wars, it was conclusively established that life and death struggles between nations could not be determined without bringing to bear all the human and material resources of nations.

After Prussia's humiliation and the peace of Tilsit the system of conscription was instituted in Prussia.

Since Napoleon every branch of the white race except the English-speaking has come to the application of the principle of universal training and universal liability for service. The great and expanding Oriental empire of Japan has developed an absolute application of the universal system to the salvation of her national life and the extension of her power and territory, until in the short space of half a century she has emerged from an inconsiderable isolation to a position commanding respect and fear. China is an exception, and every few years witnesses the lopping-off of a slice of her territory and population by some power with a tithe of China's military resources but possessing a greater proportion of organized military strength. How can a patriot advocate national impotence and pacifism in light of China's experience?

Great Britain, the greatest sea-power of history, is driven to compulsion to cut any figure on land in the great world war. Switzerland, Australia, Argentina, Chile—all have bowed to the inevitable. America is the only free nation of any consequence in the world to hold back. America, in the Civil War, the only real test of her life, had to fall in line. America now cannot escape without humiliation or disaster the operation of an absolute and universal law of national life in the present condition of human nature and international morality. If this nation heeds the maudlin preachments of its Fords and Bryans, it will pay for it by billions of levied treasure, by millions of lives

slaughtered in a sacrifice to unpreparedness, and by abject and unprecedented national humiliation, if not extinction. The inescapable logic of history and the contemporary spectacle in Europe demonstrates what happens in modern war to the nation inadequately prepared.

Not only is universal service essential to safety, but it is just. As there is universality of benefit derived from American citizenship, so there is universality of obligation derived from that same citizenship. It is no more the duty of Peter to serve his country than it is the duty of Paul. It is the duty of the state to take both Peter and Paul to train them for the performance of the duty that one day may be required of them. To require them to defend their country on the field of battle without previous training is murder. Upon rich and poor, wise and unwise, rests the equal duty of training for the defense of the nation : to each is given the equal opportunity to advance in military rank, irrespective of wealth or derivation. Each citizen required to render a concrete service to the state that protects him and the state that he in turn should be eager to protect, and no matter from what race stock he may come—Teuton, Slav, Czech, Italian, Celt or Anglo-Saxon—all rubbing elbows in a common service to a common Fatherland—out comes the hyphen—up goes the Stars and Stripes and in a generation the melting pot will have melted. Universal military service will be the elder brother of the public school in fusing this American race.

Not only is universal military service necessary and just. It is also democratic. There is no connection between universal military service and militarism. Militarism is the supremacy of force, is the subordination of law, is the contempt for the rights of individuals, is the aggressive, ruthless and immoral intention and purpose behind either organized or unorganized force, behind great force or medium-sized force or little force.

The mob of the Reign of Terror was militarism. The Oriental despotism where the ruler lops off the head of the subject is militarism, though a modern and well-trained battalion of troops could march without real opposition through his domain. Also, a highly organized modern state may build up a military organization that, if not controlled by the people, may endanger

their liberties. But there is no fundamental connection between the political structure of the government of a given people and the existence of the principle of universal military service as the foundation for the organization of the physical force of the nation essential to the integrity of its policy and its territory.

The most dissimilar governments existing in the world today organize their military forces on the foundation of universal service. Russia, the patriarchal and religious autocracy; Germany, the centralized, imperialistic federation; Austria-Hungary, imperialistic dual monarchy; France, the centralized and democratic republic; Italy and Spain, constitutional monarchies; Switzerland and Australia, including New Zealand, the nearest approach to direct democracies now existing in the world—all these nations, differing as much as nations can differ in their types of government and variety of political aspirations, ideals and standards, have come to the adoption of manhood service. In each of these countries doubtless the organized military forces have a different relationship with the other agencies of government and a different political status, but the relation and status of the military organization in any given country is not dependent so much upon the mechanical structure and foundation of that organization as upon the political character and the political institutions of the people. A big, well-developed physical specimen of manhood may or may not be mean, aggressive, selfish, greedy, ruthless, a bully—usually he is not.

We want no great standing armies to corrupt our ideals or endanger our liberties. At all times must the military power in this nation be subordinated to the civil. In the republic of Switzerland we have our model. There is no trouble about devising a system adequately to develop the strength of the nation without in any wise endangering our liberties.